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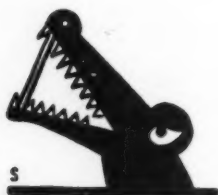
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PUPPETRY JOURNAL

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Burr's Philosophy

Burr Tillstrom

Excerpts from an address by BURR TILLSTROM at the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Committee on Art Education at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, Thursday evening, March 19, 1953 at 8:25 p.m.

Years ago when I was in high school, I had the good fortune to have a very wonderful drama coach. I remember a particular day very vividly because it was the first time that something from out of the ether came to me and said, "the theatre is for you." The question before the class was: "What is the purpose of the theatre?" Everyone had great fancy ideas and great fancy answers relating to education and many abstract things. The kids all went off at great tangents. I could only think of one answer, and I was frightened to death to raise my hand, but, I thought, well, what can I lose! So, I said I think the purpose of the theatre is to entertain. It was like a great clap of thunder! I was the fairheaded boy for the rest of the season!

It was right. I was delighted that it came to me as a very strong thought and as a very true and honest thought. I have learned over and over since that time that it IS the right answer. So we in the entertainment business have only one purpose, and that is to entertain. Any by-products of that purpose are perfectly welcome. We are happy if we educate, if we can add something to the betterment of our audience, to help them in anyway, but our intention is not to educate.

I don't know whether puppetry is an art in itself or not. I have often argued with myself whether puppetry is actually an art or a combination of

the arts. Of course, theatre in any sense, I think, is a combination of arts, but puppetry particularly is a very amazing conglomeration of arts and crafts. It includes, of course, all the manual arts, the creation and construction of the puppets, the designs that go into the costumes, the designs that go into the actual puppets themselves. However, true puppetry does not stop there, because the purpose of a puppet is to entertain. He is the same as an actor. One feels a little bit like the creator when one makes a puppet and makes him perform.

Just to make him is not enough, but to make him perform is the complete fulfillment which in a way is very much like life.

I think we are puppeteers because we want to run the whole show. We are not puppeteers because — at least, this is my idea — we just like to paint or because we just like to act or because we just like to write plays or sing or mold some clay. We are puppeteers because we want to do the whole thing, running everything from the beginning, and brooking no nonsense.

Now, there are very few people in the theatre to day who are fortunate enough to do that — I don't really know one person who can run the whole thing except a puppeteer.

Most puppeteers don't make very much money, but that doesn't matter, because they can run the whole thing. When we started "Kukla, Fran and Ollie," it was in 1947 — October 13th. It also happens to be my birthday. It was the most wonderful present I ever received. "Kukla and Ollie" and most of the Kuklapolitans were already in existence. Kukla is, not in age, but in the number of years I

have been associated with him, about seventeen, going on eighteen. He has no age, or if he has he won't tell it — like most actors, and very wise, too.

Many people have asked us what did we intend to do with "Kukla, Fran and Ollie," — how did we plan it? Was this a great secret plan that was formulated for months and months and worked on?

Well, the stories that have been told about us are absolutely true. We started, "Kukla and Ollie," on a Monday following a Thursday when we first thought of it. We had exactly four days to get ready. Fran and I had worked before in various single shows, but had never worked on television together before. Miss Zachary, Beulah Zachary, who is our producer, had worked with me on some programs at our local station in Chicago. As a matter of fact, all of us knew each other, but we had not done a show together, a series of shows together, just an occasional one. When they called me and asked me if I would like to do a television show for fifteen weeks, five days a week, I was delighted, because up until that time I had been doing television shows for nothing, and I was promised money for this. Please don't misunderstand my motives. Very seriously — I believe I can speak for Fran too—. As a matter of fact she said the other day that if anything ever happened to the show, "I don't believe I could stand it; we would just do shows anyway for ourselves." That is absolutely true. We do the show because we love it.

I think that any artist is an artist because he loves his work. Also, I am very practical. I think artists should make money. I think they deserve to make as much money as any other person in any other business, because an artist many times puts more of himself into his work, and he gives more of himself. Therefore, he must receive not only the spiritual and

mental pay but the material pay as well.

I had done television from 1939 to 1947, most of the time without getting paid for it, and I couldn't be happier because I loved it. It was wonderful. It was the most exciting experience in the world to work in those very, very, early days, and when they asked me if I would do a show, I said I would be delighted, that KUKLA and OLLIE and I will be down there.

We got together on a Friday for a program meeting. Our director and Beulah and I sat in with the head of the station and some agency people and, also, a sponsor, RCA, if I may be so bold, and they said, "Well, Burr, we are going to have an hour show, five hours a week. We want you to work KUKLA and OLLIE and do little things like bits of this and that, and then when you are through with that, you come out in front and you sell records. Then you go back in and do some more little things."

They would forget that I have to work in a tee shirt, you know. However, you cannot change that fast on television. We had to have something else. We were on a very low budget and they wanted to save as much as they could.

Someone said, "Well, how about some writers?" The only thing I could think of was not whether the writers would be right for the show or not, but I was trying to think with both hands busy how was I going to turn the pages of the script with my foot.

So I looked across the table at Beulah — Beulah was kind of in back of the people who made the suggestion, and she kind of went (shaking head indicating no.)

I said: "No, I think that what I would like would be to have somebody working in front with me." We had done several shows before where an MC would appear at the front of the stage and KUKLA would heckle

him, or interrupt the program. We worked out acts that way in many different places. I realized that that wonderful human contact with the puppet was a very successful formula.

So I said: "I would like a girl, and I would like a pretty girl. I would like one who can sing." And kind of like a chorus all these people spoke up and said: "Fran Allison." It all came in unison. I was delighted. It was the perfect answer, as you all know, but we were even delighted then before we had ever worked together.

So we called up Fran and she said: "Oh, yes, I would be delighted." She didn't even ask if she was getting paid. It shows how much of an artist she is, you see.

So on Monday we met, Fran and I shook hands, and the show has been on the air ever since.

I worried over the week-end what I was going to do for thirteen weeks, five days a week, because I didn't believe there would be enough ideas. So I put down two weeks of ideas in a little notebook, and I came in Monday morning very proudly with ten ideas, ten little ideas of shows, and, believe me, we have never used one. We started talking, and OLLIE and FRAN and KUKLA became friends. They were curious about each other and they fell in love, and that is the story of our life.

So many people have asked us what audience do we play to, an adult audience or children's audience. Well, we don't play to any age. I have absolutely no age in mind when I am working on the show. We play because we love to do the show.

It has been a miraculous thing to me and to all of us concerned that the show appeals to so many ages and, also, to so many different kinds of people. People whose tastes are strictly theatrical and are, what we call, "in the business," love the show for one thing, and, oddly enough, I will

perhaps speak to a street car conductor or a taxi driver who will know the show and he will say the same thing. It is a mystery to me. I don't understand it. However, Beulah has often told me I shouldn't try to understand it, just do it and not figure it out.

Little children will write us letters, and we have a very, very young audience. Sometimes we get letters from parents whose children are perhaps a year old who watch the show.

Now, that doesn't make sense to me. I cannot believe it but these are very sincere people and, obviously, telling the truth.

The only clue that I have perhaps to the whole thing is that it is not just the motion of "Kukla, Fran and Ollie" together, but it also has something to do with a certain kindness, a certain softness and quietness which is expressed through Fran in her relationship with Kukla and all the other Kuklapolitan players. I think the songs, - some of the music that we do - are pretty noisy too, but there is a general feeling of affection and warmth and friendship that is reflected in the show, and perhaps that carries over. Who knows? It is my only clue to it.

Oddly enough, the very aged people — we have letter from people in their eighties and nineties — and also people who have just come from foreign countries who speak very little English, sometimes they have other members of their family write the letter to us. These people also seem to get something of the same feeling.

I wish — well, I don't wish I knew what it was, because I probably would become too self-conscious — we all would — but we are very grateful and very happy that that quality exists.

So when the question arises about age groups, we have none. We think of no particular age group. We are just happy that as many people enjoy

it as do and that they share it with us, because that is really what it is.

There is a question, too, about some of our characters. People have asked me, how does Ollie go over with very little children, and how about Beulah Witch, what is the reaction.

Well, that again is an amazing thing. The very little children love Beulah Witch. She has the greatest fans of all the Kuklapolitans among the very little children. I don't know why it is, because she is a witch — obviously, she is a witch, and she sometimes goes native. On Halloween she gets kind of carried away and starts brewing up things, and, as a result, the only thing that no one could ever mention to her is "Gingerbread." That is the key word. That sends her. She gets a kind of glaze over her eyes. We don't mention "Gingerbread" — but other than that she is a very gentle and kindly person, a little pathetic. Sometimes I feel kind of sorry for her. However, she is smarter than you think. You think that she cannot see sometimes and she cannot hear, but, actually, she hears a lot more than she pretends.

Now, Ollie is a dragon, and the most dragon of any dragon. I mean, he describes himself as all dragon and a yard wide.

I don't dare call Kukla and Ollie puppets around home, just the same as Fran will never go backstage and look at them in any other way but when they are alive on the stage. So I have to be very careful about the technical information. They don't want to know any of these things. Ollie was created as a dragon because in most puppet shows, starting with the traditional Punch, there is that wonderful creature who causes suspense and excitement in a youngster audience. Also, a very good reason is that he is a different kind of puppet. You have to be very practical when you are only working with two hands. You have to think of differ-

ent ways of constructing different puppets. Ollie is like this (indicating) and the others are like this (indicating). There are really only a few ways you can make hands move, so it is always good to have one that goes like this (indicating). In most puppet shows there is one that goes like this (indicating). He may be a dog, an elephant, but there is always one that goes like that. I created Ollie with that thought in mind.

However, I somehow could not bring myself to make a ferocious dragon, because at the time I was playing for very, very young children, and it seemed to me a wrong thing to do, and yet I wanted the effect of that creature. So Ollie became Ollie the sweet dragon with only one tooth. He had to have that because he is a very civilized dragon. He is very proud of that one tooth, because, you see, a tooth like that doesn't decay as fast as other teeth. There is nothing on each side, you see.

He has lovely eyelashes and quite attractive hair. He thinks so, and even Fran agrees with him. That is why Ollie was born, to be a gentle person.

The Kuklapolitans have no villains. I tried once. One of the last characters that we created was Colonel Crackie. He and Dolores Dragon of the regular members of the Kuklapolitans were created since we started these series. Colonel Crackie was inspired by a friend who wanted me to put in a strong kind of charlatan type of character, a kind of medicine man, a person who was just a little shady. He came on the show, and it just couldn't be. Madam Ooglepuss immediately became attached to him and called him her own, and I never had the heart to disappoint her. So he may have been a shady character years ago, that might have been true, but when he joined the Kuklapolitans he reformed.

I never realized — this was not a

conscious thing, creating no villains. Suddenly I looked back and we discovered that — we were talking about it one night — there were no villains among the Kuklapolitans, that each person was his own villain, which is, I believe a part of our philosophy evidently, that only within one's self do you find the villain. No other person has any more of a villain's tendency really than yourself. It may seem to be, but it really is not so. It may take another form. It may seem to be exaggerated. However, the quality actually is that we are our own worst enemy, to use a cliché. We do things to ourselves which bring on unhappiness and which may destroy peace of mind. At least, that is a part of the philosophy of KUKLA, FRAN AND OLLIE. So when they have quarrels, disagreements, or jealousies, these are never of a very deep nature. They don't hate each other. They love each other. The only things that are ever wrong with them are the things they do to themselves, and eventually they find that out, or, we hope they do. We try to make it come out happy. I don't know what a psychiatrist would say about it, but we try to make it always happy, forgiving and comfortable every night.

I remember when I was very young

I used to have teddy bears and dolls and all sorts of little animals, stuffed animals. I always loved miniature things and little creatures that I could animate and give personality to, and I could never go to bed at night unless all these little creatures were comfortable. That was a silly thing. I gave them life. They seemed suddenly to have it outside of me. I could never be comfortable at night unless they were covered, unless they had a nice cushion, were in a comfortable place to sleep.

I am sure many people have the same feeling. It is not unusual. That is, I suppose, behind the idea of children taking their dolls and favorite stuffed toys to sleep with them. I suppose that has carried over with me. I guess I never grew up from that stage, because I like to see the Kuklapolitans happy at the end of every show, or approaching happiness. I like to see them comfortable.

It makes me uncomfortable if I go home and leaving something up in the air, and I know that Fran feels the same way, and all of us associated feel that. We like to have it all come out right and since we run the show we can do it, you see. Nobody can stop us from doing that.

As Others See Us

Hope Bunin

Puppetry is an old, old medium, one of the oldest theatre mediums. It has more than its share of ups and downs in popularity, understanding, and compensation. With the advent of television, it seemed for some time as though puppets had found a permanent niche in the hearts and homes of America. There were lots of physical reasons for this: even the most inept

of cameramen (the engineer, whom you heard yesterday inquiring, "Which is the end I point?") had more trouble losing all or part of a puppet than he did a human being; on a small screen (much smaller than they are now), a puppet suffers far less from reduction than people do; puppets are more flexible than people, their features can be emphasized in carving and

painting, or simplified to make a point. For a long time puppets were in solid with TV.

The picture has now changed. Fran, Kukla and Ollie are practically the barometer of puppets on TV, since they are the oldest and the most popular of puppet shows. When their time was cut—from an hour to half an hour, from 30 to 15 minutes, . . . from five days a week to one—it indicated a definite trend in the TV pattern. We who have worked in the puppet field, the last eight years or so have had relatively good years. It has been our first chance to make puppets an important theatre medium—at least in terms of tremendous audiences. Television has been good for us mentally, financially, and technically. For the first time in the history of puppetry not only have people looked at us, but also we have been able to look at us.

There are so many facets to puppets in TV, it's hard to emphasize a single point, but I'm going to try. Whether puppeteers made money or didn't in TV, they had an opportunity to see themselves while they were working by using the monitor. Of course, doing a daily show with new material, when the show is on the air, there isn't too much time to look at monitors. In our shows we watched the puppets we were manipulating, read the script, kept track of the time, and, whenever possible, used an unemployed eye to glance at the monitor. We found in looking at kinescopes a way to evaluate our work, to correct many things; but by the time that we realized our mistakes that show was over. The monitor was there on the spot, at the very moment of the performance. If the cameraman started to pan at stage right when the action was at the stage left, we have been known to whistle at him and say with the puppet, "Hey! I'm over here." This has happened more than once while we were on the air. Monitors have often helped save a show. There

was the unforgettable occasion when operations forgot to assign a crew to do the show. The best crew the station had (one which had, fortunately done our show before) arrived ten minutes before air time. We had rehearsed for the director, and we went through the show roughing out the action for the camera men. The show went more smoothly than many which had full rehearsal because we had a monitor.

The great virtue of the monitor, however, is apparent during rehearsal. Remember the early advertisement for TV. Everyone in the audience would have a front row seat center right in their own living room. It was possible, but all too often everyone in the house found himself suddenly in the first box on the left, the last row of the balcony on the right, or out in the lobby. We tried to avoid this. Before we went to the studio we rehearsed at home. We planned our closeups, our distant shots: we watched the monitor not only to see if we were selling what we wanted to sell. If we weren't we could correct and change.

Monitors, of course, are not unmixed blessings. Seeing an error that cannot be corrected is considerably upsetting. Probably ignorance is preferable. The monitors can misbehave and distort even when the picture going out over the air is all right.

Once we had a monitor which went completely out of hand. It happened when we were doing a script where Foodini was calling the Magicians' Union by a crystal ball, with mists and magic and sound effects. We were using two stages, cutting back and forth from Foodini at the home to the office at the Union. The monitor was between the two. Suddenly we realized that there was smoke in the studio, and that it was coming from the monitor. Since we were the only ones who paid any attention to the monitor, we had some difficulty

in calling it to the floorman's attention. The show continued although there were some new lines in the script. . . "Concentrate, Mr. Foodini, please concentrate!" Finally we made a cameraman see. He pointed it out to the floor man. The floor man found some stage hands on a sofa on another set. The monitor sat on a movable table, and by this time it was really smoking. There was a good deal more mist in the picture than we had planned. The stage hands pushed the monitor to the floor, adding some unplanned sound effects to the show. There was a certain amount of confusion in the studio and ad libbing in place of the script. When we went off the air, on schedule, there was chaos. As I remember, 15,000 volts

of power ran into that monitor. The climax of the whole affair was a violent protest from the stage hands who insisted it was the duty of the air-conditioning crew (none of whom were present as the air conditioning was turned off during air time) to put out fires. Someone non-union-for-the-job drenched it finally with the fire extinguisher. The anti-climax was that no one watching the show knew that it hadn't been shown as rehearsed.

There is a long road ahead in TV for all branches of the theater. There will be many improvements, and there is a lot to learn. If we puppet people set our standards high enough, we can be confident of a firm place in this medium.

Johnny Jupiter

A new TV puppet show was launched in New York on Saturday, March 21, 1953, at 7:30 o'clock p.m. over the Du Mont network (Channel 5). It is an unusual show theme—yet not exactly original—it deals with the man from the earth and the men and women portrayed by puppets from another planet. It is a delightfully witty videoq fantasia that has charm, intelligence, and a wonderfully satirical point of view—a natural for puppet shows. It is aimed loosely at adults or children and has a slight flavor of Kukla, Fran, and Ollie as well as Howdy Doody.

The ingenious script involves Mr. Ernest Duckweather (played by Vaughn Taylor) who is a janitor in a TV studio. He is ambitious to become a video engineer and cannot resist tinkering with all of the dials and switches in the contact room.

Through his tinkering, he contacts on the video screen two emissaries from the planet Jupiter. How clever

of them not to choose that hackneyed planet, Mars. The Jupiterians are Johnny Jupiter and his sidekick B12. Johnny is a cute saucer-eyed hand puppet, expertly manipulated by Carl Harms. B12 has a walrus mustache, a top hat, and, paradoxically, an English accent.

Upon taking a look at our world, Johnny is appalled at our manners and customs. He and his companion note that we seem to be concerned mostly with matters of depression, taxation, and television.

They cannot understand why there is any traffic problem in the big cities on earth. The problem was solved simply on Jupiter. Up there they picked out the most congested streets and erected signs that read: "Parking allowed." The enlightened planet dwellers who are fanatic individualists immediately looked for another place to park their cars.

(Continued on page 22)



PUPPET PARADE

(see photo section)

BURR TILLSTROM

Burr, a charter member of the P of A discusses his philosophy of the puppet theater as demonstrated by his TV show, KUKLA FRAN and OLLIE, in the feature article of this month's JOURNAL.

BY THE BUNINS

Foodini, one of the popular pioneer puppet characters creates his usual comedy by setting up a newspaper office. As always Foodini gets the glory and Pinhead reaps the trouble. Their antics initiate a series of complicated comic situations delighting both the children and the adults.

In one of Foodini's sweeter moments, he inspects his garden. This garden, however, proves to be no bed of roses, and really ran him ragged; his crop turned out to be 100% ragweed.

The TV puppet world has become very dependent on the Bunins who have created numerous characters such as the two shown, which have been extremely well known to millions of people. Strong and imaginative, each puppet character comes to life with a lift of the eyebrow or a flick of the hand.

LILI

Reynardo, Marguerite, Carrot-Top, and Golo, the motion picture screen's newest stars with wooden heads and hearts of stone (created by those master craftsman, Walton and O'Rourke)

share their stellar billing with Leslie Caron playing the part of Lili in a technicolor musical romance by the same name, a whimsical and delightful motion picture built around the story of a little girl who falls in love with the puppets. She feels that the puppets are her best friends and spends a good many hours discussing life, love, and the pursuit of happiness with Carrot-Top and Reynardo, who are a bit cynical about life. Matching the puppets are their human counterparts wearing life-like masks which are large replicas of the puppet faces. The emotions of the puppets and the humans are intermixed producing a cleverly original script. According to the critics, the puppets almost steal the show.

VAUGHN TAYLOR AND JOHNNY JUPITER

Vaughn Taylor, as Ernest P. Duck-weather, the studio janitor who dreams of a career as a TV engineer, is surprised when he contacts Johnny Jupiter from another planet. The show is the newest puppet TV production.

PAUL'S PUPPETS

"Paul's Puppets" have become very popular on New York TV. Bernard Paul and his wife, Edith should know the medium very well since they gave their first TV show in 1931 over a small TV experimental station in Wheaton, Maryland. After a lapse of 17 years in which they traveled over

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Burr Tillstrom



by
THE BUNINS

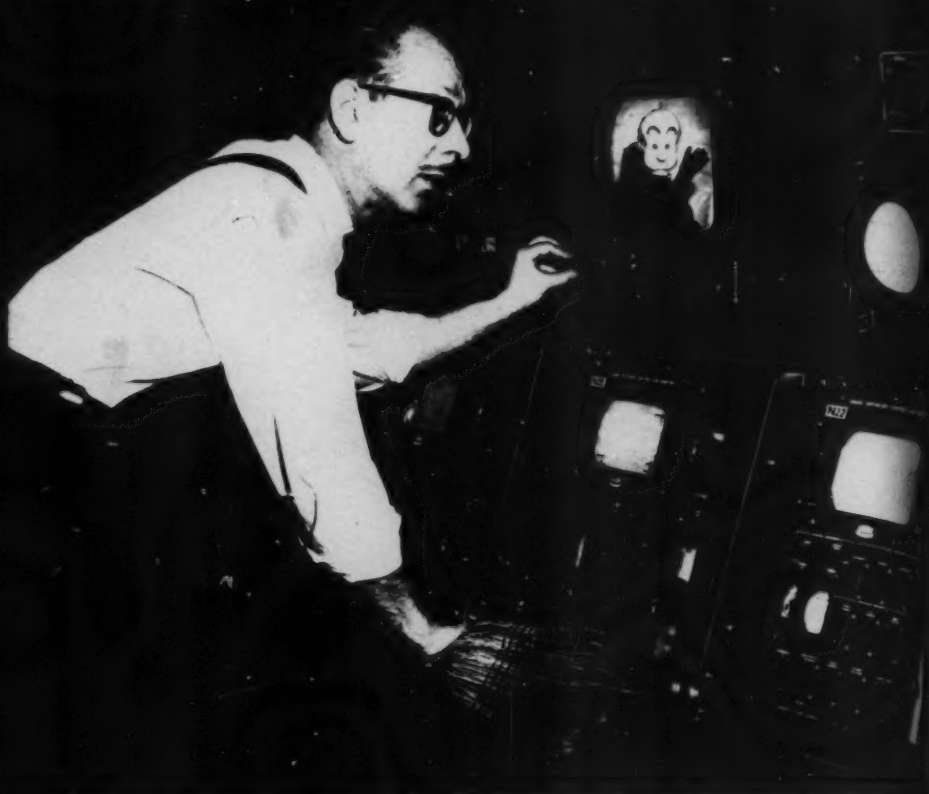






'LILI'





VAUGHN TAYLOR

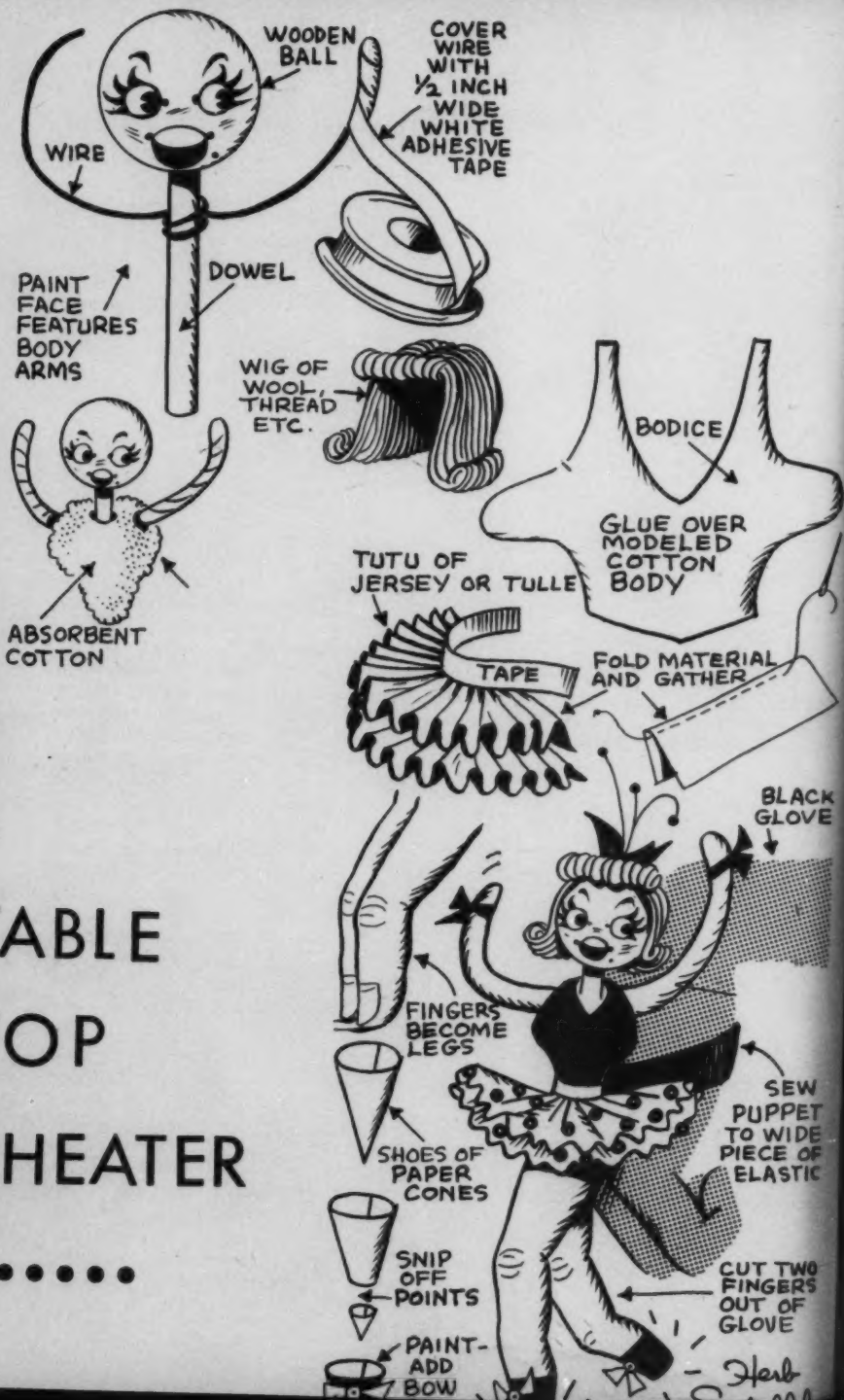


PAUL'S



PUPPETS

TABLE TOP THEATER



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the country with their marionette shows, they returned to the TV medium on WBAL TV March 22, 1948. They have been producing a Tuesday and Thursday show ever since and have now acquired a repertoire of 42 fairy tales and 421 marionettes.

They have the distinction of giving the first command performance in the Ballroom of the White House for Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and her guests.

Both Mrs. and Mr. Paul were students at Maryland Institute, Bernard

majoring in stagecraft and Edith in costuming, a perfect combination for a puppet team.

TABLE TOP THEATER

Herb Scheffel tells the puppeteer "how" and now he shows him "how". Herb Scheffel presents a complete step-by-step drawing to aid the novice finger puppeteer.

Table Top Theater

Herb Scheffel

In my day I used to read innumerable technical books on puppetry with inviting titles that sounded like "It's So Simple To Be A Puppet Showman." It sounded attractive enough. Later I found out that it took many cubic feet of storage and working space for the equipment of a marionette production.

There must be some branch of puppetry, I thought, where you could present entertainment without going in for double bridges, masking, trunks full of puppets, props and scenery — and still do a novel show. The possibilities of working in a new puppetry medium came out of attending the June 1938 P of A Festival, held at the Medinah Club in Chicago, where I saw my first performances of variety and ballet done with finger puppets. I've never seen a more charming performance than the original ballet "Island Legend" presented by Lucille and Frank Follmer (with choreography by Janice Fink) and a couple of variety turns (ballerina and performing elephant) by Burr Tillstrom. The tiny figures were no more than 6 to 8 inches tall, and the stage was about 2 or 3 feet wide, covered

in black velvet and illuminated by something resembling small searchlights. These imaginative pieces set me off and I've been experimenting with them for the past fifteen years.

Besides Tillstrom and the Follmers, there are other puppeteers who have been working in this medium for some time. George Andre Martin has used finger puppets in his vaudeville variety act for years. Lea and Alfred Wallace created a number of small characters during the last war which they called "digitaters." Marion Myers has been using them on TV shows; Jero Magon and Walter Gehris use the medium in puppetry teaching classes; a close-up shot of the little blonde puppet character "Margarite" in the motion picture LILI (puppet sequences in this movie by Walton and O'Rourke) is sheer finger puppet technique.

I began to do something about finger puppets slowly at first, so that today after many mistakes, I have a cast of variety turns and am introducing a couple of original ballets. The latter will be done to special music written by the modern composer John B. Lancaster, Jr., who has a sym-

pathetic understanding of puppets. All my variety turns were routined, as far as the music goes, with the help of Geraldine Agress, who has done considerable work in the music department for puppet shows and acts, with great understanding.

It's fun to do the whole show by yourself and it IS possible. Two figures on stage (movable at the same time) are all that can be worked by one person. You shouldn't have more than one assistant for more than one makes too much confusion backstage, unless you have every backstage movement worked out like dance choreography, a la Les Mains Joly.

The show runs smoother with one puppeteer, though at the start it is helpful to have someone around to work the lights, recordings, play a piano, work a tape recorder, set off a music box or handle special sound effects.

During rehearsals, you'll find that your show will grow — accidental slips will work into the routines you've planned, some of these turning into bigger laughs when emphasized or broadened. Some routines seem to "jell" after a couple of run-throughs, while on the other hand I have a scarecrow character that was created in 1951, who still hasn't a fool-proof "sock" routine.

Your show can be "set" routines, or improvised. This latter spontaneity goes over best for party shows, and if you add audience participation you can be a crashing success. I've seen finger puppets used on large vaudeville stage bills, but like all real puppetry, their charm is for small audiences only.

I've had a lot of fun entertaining at a variety of parties, on ocean liner ship's concerts and cabarets, sick-bed performances for invalids, European sidewalk cafes, photography club "shooting" parties, etc. All these gatherings were small and intimate — so that you can take your show, lit-

erally, in your coat pocket, and perform ANYWHERE, at the drop of a hat, with a mouth harmonica. I even entertained some jittery passengers aboard a BEA plane en route from Rome to Nice, Summer 1951.

If you're not content with building just one fingerine for fun at parties, and want a more ambitious entertainment, make sure you have a definite idea of an overall finished show. Have a definite idea of how many figures, how few props you can work with. Try to do as much entertainment as possible with as few things as possible. A couple of my variety performers wear two sets of costumes. The under costume is actually pasted to the figure, and a second costume (used earlier in the performance) is "press-buttoned" over it. It takes only a half second to snap off a costume, lift off a wig, and presto, in a few seconds, George (or Georgiana) Spelvin" doubling in brass.*

Finger puppets have been called by a number of other names: digets, fingerettes, fingerines, digetators, finger people, etc. Besides at parties, they're suitable to be performed in small night clubs, store window advertising, TV commercials and special spots, school room entertainment, hospital wards, and crafts teaching. It's best to start with a series of variety turns, and later, after you've experimented and performed with these, you can graduate to skits, original short ballets, pantomimes, where you won't have to use real voices. It's best NOT to use voices—at least not a natural human voice—for it's volume is out of character with the minute size of the fingerine. Add as much novelty and illusion, unusual movements as your manipulating fingers and active brain can muster up. In time you'll learn the trick of things "seeming" to be impromptu.

Further tips on manipulation: The size of the puppets being so small—exaggerate your movements. Make

them broad, definite and sure. Heighten, and burlesque the animation. Use plenty of variety in movement, rhythms and timing. Because the action of these tiny puppets is so limited you must, above all, boil your routines down to the core — keep them light, snappy and short — DON'T repeat effects or movements in the same number. Your action is mostly in the legs (made of your index and middle fingers). Practice in front of a mirror. When you think you've drawn every possible gesture or movement a puppet is capable of, toss the puppet to a spectator at a party performance some evening and invite him to try his hand at manipulation for fun. THEN — sit aside and keep your eyes open — some accidental movement by this novice showman will reveal a twist or effect or two that you can incorporate — some movement will present itself that might fit into an empty spot of an unfinished dance routine you have on your hands. (No pun intended.) Main thing is to keep polishing the numbers and adding to the animation. Make the figures do things that are impossible for humans to do — after all that is REAL puppetry. A puppet only, can dance on his head, walk up the arm of a sick child in bed and sit on the child's head; a fingerine can act up to pets around the house, talk to a gold fish, come out of a pie, walk an imaginary moon or sun beam — these are puppets you're working, not human actors, and so "anything goes." Remember: it's entertainment and you're an entertainer.

As to arranging your program, if it's variety, or variety with a skit or two to pad the performance: get your weakest numbers off first, then go into your novel and humorous things for the climax. "Build" it. Be confident about your work — after all you like your work or you shouldn't be doing it. Establish your entertainment "type" at the very starts with

something simple to get over the idea that these are really tiny puppets — no hands, no strings. "Always leave them wondering" how it was done. Work fast, even though you only have a 12 or 15 minute show which has been rehearsed well and diligently.

Stages can be made of bridge table-tops, piano tops, cardboard or orange crate boxes set upon a parlor table. An elaborate, velvet covered and draped portable working table on castors can come later. Wear a black or navy blue suit or dress. Use few or no props. Scenery isn't necessary. Cover your table or stage with black or blue velvet, as close as possible to the color of the outfit you wear. Lighting is more important than settings. Use searchlights, a tiny pin spot, or a slide projector's beam. Black or blue gloves should be worn on your hand working the puppet. White or pastel gloves can be dyed. Cut the index and middle fingers out of your glove — these become the puppets legs during the performance. I have had navy blue velvet gloves sewn up for me of the same velvet used on my tiny stage drapes.

Too many words can spoil your fun later, and I still believe that illustrations show how I started my first 5 inches high figures, though I no longer build my present 10 to 12 inch high finger puppets along these methods. Just remember that these are just suggestions — you go on from here — you may have other ideas, and better experiments will be the results. Let my ideas serve as your springboard — go ahead and simplify or elaborate on my tips. Costume and paint your finger puppets shockingly brilliant so that these tiny actors will stand out against a dark background.

The materials to build this little finger puppet dancer include: a small wooden ball, a thin dowel, wire, adhesive tape, wool or embroidery thread for a wig, a piece of jersey or tulle, material for the bodice, some

tape binding, 2-ply drawing paper for the shoes, absorbent cotton for the torso, Ducco household cement, sequins, oil paints and brushes, some wide garter or suspender elastic (black).

You can build finger puppets to represent animals, birds, dancers, pantomine figures, clowns, insects, gnomes, exotic, abstract and bizarre figures or symbols. Make them imaginative — they do not have to duplicate a human actor. After all they are puppets, and puppets are not people.

I've found that a whole glove, with feathers or fur attached, can become the complete body of an animal or fantastic bird. Each puppet is different, and each character is differently built. Each experiment is interesting because during the manipulation of the puppet your hand has become the "control" — you build your puppet AROUND YOUR CONTROL.

*George Spelvin: Traditional, fictitious name used by all legitimate theatre people when playing a second "bit" part or walk-on in a show.

JOHNNY JUPITER

(continued from page 9)

Also Johnny and B12 were unable to understand our craze for bathing Beauty Contests—"rituals of anatomy worship"—. Why make all the fuss over a pretty girl who can take care of herself when its the homely babe who needs the attention? Or why all the ruckus about vacations? Live like the inhabitants of Jupiter—live to enjoy yourself and when that gets tiresome, find a job. Workations are more than vacations!

Johnny and B12 are not the only puppet characters. There is Mr. 1000, a typical boss on Jupiter and Miss 7, his secretary. Their conversation was as whimsical as that between Johnny and Mr. Duckweather. In one scene Mr. 1000 is shown upbraiding the secretary.

"I've been told that you're devoting entirely too much time to your work," says 1000 severely. "You're only taking an hour for lunch."

"Oh, that isn't so," says Miss 7, close to tears.

FESTIVAL!

If you have suggestions for the Festival or the Institute, or need information about either, write to;

Lemuel Williams, Chairman
2077 Lincoln Ave.,
St. Paul, Minn.

INSTITUTE!

Important Notice

The performance that was scheduled for Monday evening, the night before the opening of the Festival has been cancelled, because of a change in University schedule. However the sight-seeing trip for Monday afternoon is still scheduled. All facilities are available over the week end for those who want to come early, relax and visit, or lend a hand with the thousand-and-one last-minute jobs that always turn up.

Festival! Festival! Festival!

June 23-24-25-26

FESTIVAL

The Festival literature, including brochure and registration blanks, with full particulars of the 1953 Festival, compiled by the co-chairman Lem Williams and John Shirley has been mailed from the Executive Office.

The Journal will not repeat this information, other than to urge you to attend the 1953 Festival, June 22, 23, 24 and 25 at the beautiful University of Minnesota, where you will enjoy the fellowship of hundreds of puppeteers for four of the fullest "puppet days" that you may hope to spend.

A full program of professional puppet shows, lectures, demonstrations, discussions, puppet movies and exhibits has been planned to cover every phase of puppetry.

Lem William and John Shirley as co-chairman have planned this Festival to make every minute of this Festival a real festival in every sense of the word. With the co-operation of the University of Minnesota, it promises to be a Festival you can't afford to miss.

EXHIBIT

One of the highlights of the Festival will be the Exhibit of puppets, properties, stages, photos, etc. The Exhibit gives everyone attending the Festival a chance to see and examine the work of professionals and amateurs from every part of the country. Over 500 puppets were on display last year.

Material for the exhibit will be accepted from any member of the P. of A. Exhibit material must be shipped with **charges prepaid**. It will

receive the usual careful handling and protection and will be returned **express collect**.

Ship to:

Puppetry Exhibit,
Center for Continuation Study,
University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis, Minnesota.

GALLERY NIGHT

The special attraction in Baton Rouge was "Lagniappe" but in Minneapolis it will be "Gallery Night." Gallery Night originated at the Regional Conference held at the University of Minnesota two years ago.

It will be an informal gathering with the exhibitors acting as hosts and hostesses, ready to introduce their puppets and to answer questions on their displays. Impromptu shows will be given at the drop of a hat. Coffee will be served all evening. Movies will be shown in a side room, - slides in another. Everyone, including the general public will be welcome.

Gallery Night provides a wonderful chance to visit, relax, and meet the exhibiting puppeteers in an informal way. It is scheduled for June 24.

THE AUCTION

Many of the puppeteers will be interested in the revival of the Auction, which used to be a feature of the Festival.

The Auction Committee asks that unwanted or retired puppets, parts or props be donated for this auction. Everything is acceptable from a puppet part to a fully equipped stage. Old puppets as well as brand new, fresh

puppets are appreciated and their sale will swell the fund. All proceeds of the auction will go to the general expense fund of the Festival.

The auction provides an opportunity for picking up a choice memento or adding a usable puppet.

Send or bring material for the auction, plainly marked "Auction," to

Lemuel Williams
2077 Lincoln Ave.,
Minneapolis, Minn.

INSTITUTE

From June 27 through July 3, the Institute will offer an intensive course of instruction in puppetry making, staging, rehearsing and play writing. The course is planned for beginners, teachers, hobbyists, League groups and others interested in supplementing their knowledge of puppetry with professional instruction. Complete information is given in your Festival literature.

Institute! Institute! Institute!



Hand me the shears, Justine, it's time to prune the news. And while you're at it, send a bouquet to Milton Halpert at the Central TV Shop in N. Y. for all those items and hard-to-get pics from the big city. Fine chap, deserves the best.

In the mammoth CANDYLAND spec of the latest Ringling Bros. B. & B. Circus, the producers toss a salute to puppetry. You'll be startled to see Kukla and Ollie on parade. They also have an "Old London Punch & Judy" in the side show, and two clowns disguised as "humanettes" in the walkarounds. Gayle and Doug Anderson sent us zingy publicity on their novelty act - marionettes, magic, cartooning, ventriloquism plus live bunny and birds. Sid Krofft, the pop-

sicle puppeteer, is still cooling his heels in the Ice Show at the Hotel New Yorker. Come summer, he'll probably be the only air-conditioned act in the business with strings on his fingers and skates on his toes. Peggy Bridge Marionettes seem to be a steady week-end item at the Jan Hus House - presenting "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," "Puss In Boots," "Three Little Pigs" and others. The Greenwich Mews Theatre presented Suzari's "Pinocchio" April 9, and over in Brooklyn the Kingsland Marionettes played "The Love of The Three Oranges" at the Academy of Music on the 25th. Jim and Eleanor Sheldon had a baby boy.

Herb Scheffel popped up with another one-man show at the Rockport

Art Ass'n. Norbert's Puppets, who play musical instruments and perform feats of magic, displayed their talents at Sunnyside Progressive School in April. "Mr. Deetle Dootle" of "Rootie Kazootie" fame p. a. 'ed at Palisades Park. Jero Magon, who has done such a fine job as Puppet Theatre Editor of Players magazine, recently featured an article, "Pioneer of Puppet Lighting," about Fred Bohling, master electrician at the St. James Theatre and manufacturer of puppet lighting equipment. Lea and Gia Wallace are readying a "pop" concert with puppets for the fall season. Their students were recently treated to a travelogue, when Don Sahlin took his slides of Japan and Korea to the Dance and Puppet Center.

Justine, how would you like a tufted cotton rug, suitable for a child's room, with Louise the Lamb and Muffin the Mule (English tv stars) on it? They're available at Altman's. (Pay attention, I said the rugs, not the puppets!) And did you see the chic and simple Guignol enhancing the ads for the French Line in the Times and New Yorker? And where did you file that April MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED article about the Bairds, "Master Puppeteers?"

Walton & O'Rourke are making up for their long absence in the East by playing all the way from Montreal to Miami, with stops at New York, Washington, D. C., and Kate Smith. SCOOP! At the Cannes International Film Festival in France, "Lili" (for which Messrs. W & O'R did the puppet sequences) was named the best light comedy of the year. It is the story of a young girl, played by Leslie Caron, who falls in love with a puppeteer, Mel Ferrer. Judges praised it for the charm of its presentation, which must delight Producer Edwin Knopf and Director Chuck Walters as well as the cast.

GEORGIA, GEORGIA! The Pup-

pet Playhouse in Augusta has quietly shut down for the summer season. Jane McGuirt (Atlanta) performed with her cloth marionettes at a party for the Southeastern Music Merchants Conference, rounding out the show with wooden Pelham (English) marionettes she had demonstrated at Rich's Dept. Store. She also writes of the wonderful job Mrs. Esther Goldman is doing, in addition to her own show, or teaching the children at the Cerebral Palsy School & Clinic to make hand puppets and present plays. Rod Young left May 2 for his home in N. Y. to await the bugle call of Uncle Sam. Max Croft worked with the Brunswick Public Library on a string "Alice in Wonderland," which he designed, and was planning a starrer for Mr. Wilbur Worm. His party show (hand puppets) stars two Hippos from the deepest jungles of darkest Africa who have been transplanted to densest Georgia and close the show with "Dixie." Their names are Lola and Tallulah Egghead.

Justine, hand me that box of Nabisco Shredded Wheat - the one one with the puppet TV theatre printed on the back. Thanks. Did you see these colorful finger puppets on the inside - and look!, there's a printed script for "Howdy Gal." Never mind the biscuits, let's do the show. What's this? Oh, NO! (Fireman, save my child) They've printed opening and closing COMMERCIALS for the kiddies to say. Throw it out - we'll have eggs for breakfast.

Shirley O'Donnol presented a repeat of "Golden Cockerel" at Hecht Dept. Store in Wash., D. C. on April 11. Her summer prospect includes teaching puppetry and art at the Casper Children's Theatre in Wyoming. In Lubbock, Tex., Mrs. Alan Strout was working on a graduate research project by adapting "Julius Caesar" for production in an old stock-judging pavilion, Elizabethan style. The Gilmores toured up the West Coast, and

the Seattle Puppet Club went out to see their show in nearby Kirkland. Their new show is called "The Puppet Maker and the Mischievous Mouse" as was its successful predecessor. They got back to Denver for the first time in almost a year and a half at the end of May.

Perky Fern Zwickey reports from Detroit: "Our Guild honored Basil Milovsoroff with a tea in the lush, modern Founders Room after his performance at the Institute. More than 50 Guilders there to meet and greet him. He is so gracious. Hope they ask him to do "Sinbad" at the Fest. Two of our Guild members were married (to each other in April, Charles Finger and Laverne Flake - the third pair to mate up - Is that good? (Yes, Cupid, it is!) Ed Young, our Pres., took a job with Army Services Crafts & Entertainment Branch in Wash., D. C., last fall - says they are organizing a Guild there." Mrs. Zwickey lectured at Ball State Teacher's College in June - puppetry, of course.

The big ten-week, Coast-to-Coast tour of the Turnabout Theatre of Hollywood, which gets under way late fall, includes the Turnabout Revue, the Yale Puppeteers, Lotte Goslar and the Turnabout Jr. Circus for children's matinees. Harry Burnett says, "I am making the best marionettes of my career - larger set, of course, to play in the places we shall be booked into. A thirty minute marionette show, and the rest of the evening our best stage numbers." It is under the management of Turnabout Theatre Company.

The Jupiter Marionettes, sponsored by the Kansas G & E, stole the Home Show, a 5 day annual affair in Wichita. They did shows every half-hour from 2 - 10 p.m., using the same commercial pitch (electric ranges), but a variety of variety numbers to lure people back. Sponsors, audience, and Jupiters were delighted. A baby girl, Kathleen Lynn, weighing 8 lb.

15 oz., was born to the Ed Johnsons March 23. "Bob's Marionettes" (Robert & Donald Petza with Albina Kasda, Baltimore) gave two shows for orphanages recently, and their production "When The Music Stops" for the Bureau of Recreation. The George Latshaw Puppets launched a new show "The Runaway Rocket" at the Akron Art Institute April 4. The Recreation Dept. of Santa Barbara, Calif. has a puppetry workshop for children 7-12. They give weekly shows during the summer at a Family Picnic Program held each Sunday at one of the local parks. Joyce Gardiner is Supervisor of Special Activities. The Seattle Puppet Club will hold a one day puppet Festival June 13, featuring Williams Marionettes with "Alice" and a large exhibit at the Cornish School. The Club made its eighth TV appearance in two years on a half-hour show April 30. The Seattle Jr. League has put "The Shoemaker and the Elves" on strings to troupe to hospitalized children this year.

Hollywood's Bob Baker, one of the most energetic puppeteers in the business, has been trouping his talents outside the glamour town - fair shows at Pomona and Albuquerque, his super puppet circus at the Shrine in Santa Fe and Breckenridge Park Museum in San Antonio, Texas. Recently he did the puppet work on TV commercials for Del Monte Foods and Seagram's you-know-what. In addition to playing party shows for the stars, he and his group (Alton Wood and Zoe Brooke) have been working on a pilot production for TV called "Kite Flight," which sounds mammoth. Sets include complete houses 7' high, 8' deep and 15' long (a dozen or so) which must break apart for simple storage. The Christian Science Monitor carried a full-page story on "Scandal in Scarecrow Row," an original puppet play by Don Freeman, an artist-illustrator for the N. Y. TIMES,

etc. The world premiere was held at Santa Barbara, Calif. in a production by Ralph Geddis and Francois Martin, who happened to be fresh out of puppet plays at the time.

Mme. Screechanholler, Tweed, the talking dog, and the Green Monster are hand puppets almost three feet high in the puppet show presented by Roy G. Schultz, a student at Valley City (N. D.) State Teachers College. Recently toured quite a bit of the state. Jim Kalish and Paul Stiller (Cleveland, O.) present a hand puppet show called "Peter and the Magic Echo." Jim says he'll have a ride to the Festival for someone wishing to share expenses. Young David Mehlin appeared before an assembly at the North Adams (Mass) State Teachers College using Joe-O, his trapeze clown, which was inspired by Joe Owens ditto at the 51 Fest. Mrs. Ray C. Hawn (The Puppet Lady) of Harrisburg, Pa. does hand puppet fairy tales every Saturday at 2 p.m. for Bowman's East, a dept. store. Puppets of Bow-bo Bowman and his sister, East, m. c. the shows.

Why don't you take a tip from another career girl, Justine, and get yourself an interesting hobby like Mary J. Leake of Richmond, Indiana? She found golf hurt her feet, and chess took brains, but making marionettes had EVERYTHING. She works out her frustrations by modeling heads - gouging out eyes, twisting off noses, and mashing whole faces flat. Claims it's better than voodoo for your peace of mind. These facts came out in a mimeographed program accompanying Mary J.'s program on Hobbies for a luncheon meeting of the Altrusa Club. Miss Josephine Clapperhorn, Karl Krumbiegal (violinist) and other of her creations assisted in the demonstration. Cleveland puppeteers in the audience for Basil Milovsoroff's "Sinbad" at the Art Museum included Archie Elliott, Jim Kalish, Paul Stiller and Hank Sher-

man. Basil's latest experiments with line, form and style of movement conjure up fascinating effects. His three savages show inspired imagination - complete with built-in sound-effects - the very essence of savagery. Lewis Parsons and his mother stopped by at the Mousetrap after their tour to Oklahoma City and Denver. Don Sahlin is working awhile for Mary Chase along with Margo.

We get a fiendish glee out of stories about tape recorders, and the latest involves two young chaps working with such a show, who spent the evening with an attractive young miss demonstrating (i.e., fooling around with) the equipment. The following day, when they had set up all the equipment and were ready to play the date, they discovered they had erased the entire show from the tape. Next story, please.

MOVIES AND TELEVISION. Please don't dust the TV set, Justine, I'm watching Howdy Doody! And did you know there was a new Mexican TV program based on it, titled "Jaudi Dudi?" Justine, come back here! Oh, well. Did you catch Burr Tillstrom's appearance as m. c. on "Show of Shows?" He is reported to have an idea in the works for a new children's show, but entirely without puppets. No details have been disclosed except that it probably will be a drama. There's a new show on the Du Mont network Saturdays at 7 p.m., called "Johnny Jupiter" for which Carl Harms does the puppeteering. It was enthusiastically received by reviewers. Vaughn Taylor plays a tv studio janitor who monkeys with the controls and tunes in the planet Jupiter. Jack Gould, who doesn't rave easy, said in his March 25 review "The puppetry of Mr. Harms is unusually deft and lifelike and a first-rate job. 'Johnny Jupiter' has all the ear-marks of a real labor of love in television and on the screen at home it is great fun." Show is owned by Kagan Corp.

which operates "Howdy Doody."

Hats off, as an era passes. On April 1, Martin and Olga Stevens played their last string show with a "Passion Play" date in Cincinnati. Flowers for Olga and a speech for Steve - celebrating nineteen years in which they pioneered and proved adult drama with marionettes could be successful. Hats on again, as a new era begins. With Alfred Wallace, the Stevens will devote their future to making puppet films. This is a good bit of news, since most of the puppet work seen on our screens is imported stop action from abroad. Steve has wrought magic with "The Ant and the Grasshopper" film - editing and a new, warm narration script make it as pleasant as all get-out.

Religious Film Assn., 200 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y. has rentals on three 15 min. 16mm films "Moses in Egypt," "Moses and his People" and "Moses and the 10 Commandments" Believe these are the Beaton films. Film House, Inc., 101 Park Avenue, New York handles non-theatrical rentals on the Salzburg puppet series in color. Films are produced in Europe by Trident Films and include "The Snow Maiden," "Snow White and Rose Red," "Hansel and Gretel" and "Rapunzel" - each runs 26 minutes. "The Seven Ravens" stop-action import by the Diehl Bros. of the Grimm fairy tale got mixed reviews during its run at the Art Theatre in the Village, N. Y.

Bil and Cora Baird have been working like demons with guest appearances on tv. They scored with their St. Patrick's Day parade scene on Ed Sullivan's show - a riot; ditto their pinch-hitting for Paul Winchell. A note from Bil says their last few weeks have been taken up trying to boil CARMEN down to ten minutes for the Fred Waring show, when, as everybody should know, it takes twelve minutes, at least. Just today, we saw the Baird's "Whistling Wizard" in colorful and handsome edition of

the Golden Book series published by Simon and Schuster.

There is an early morning Sat. show, "Westward Ho," coming out of Kalamazoo, featuring "puppet fun with Ray Overholt and Dick Tillstrom." Burr's brother? Cy Kelly, Cleveland's TV puppet star, and his attractive wife Rosemary, are happily buying a home in Parma Heights. "Pepinot and Capucine" is a French language presentation of the CBC on station CBFT (Montreal), which started last fall. Characters are Mr. White, Mr. Black, Pepinot (boy) Capucine (girl) and the Bear - all hand puppets operated by French Canadians. During the recent Festival of Arts proclaimed by the Japanese Ministry of Education - one performance was the famous "Ayatsuri Sambaso" (The Third Man Is a Puppet), in which Ennosuke danced an imitation of puppets in a iavish performance.

The April 3, TV Guide featured "Paul's Puppets - A Five Year Fairy Tale" On April 7th Bernard and Edith Paul (Mr. and Mrs.) presented their 511th video performance (Tues. and Thurs. 6 - 6:15 p.m., WBAL-TV, Baltimore).

The Gilpins and Woody Willow copped space and pictures in a recent Atlanta TV Digest. Don's interest in flying saucers prompted the popular "Planet People" sequence on the show. Reservations to see the show are taken approximately three months in advance - which gives you a clue to their success. Don and Ruth will miss Rod Young's assistance during his Army duty.

Now, before we pull the last page out of the typewriter, we'd like to thank all of you who have sent news about yourselves and the world of puppetry. It has been fun hearing from you.

George

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